



Technical Information

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Update

How to Plan for Sustainability

A Neighborhood Networks Center's success—both now and in the future—relies on finding partners whose donations of time, money, and equipment will get the center up and running and provide operating resources for the future. Sustainability planning means ensuring that the center remains a viable community resource by building partnerships that supply a reservoir of expertise and capital for years to come. To get your center off to the best start, and ensure sustainability, find partners early and keep the following points in mind:

- **Draw partners from more than one source.**

Canvass your community and look for potential partners and volunteers from a variety of sources, including schools and colleges, nonprofit organizations and charities, community organizations, churches, foundations, business, government agencies, and the media. Select partners from at least three of the above categories.

- **Partners must benefit too.**

Always be able to answer a potential partner's question, "What's in it for me?" Develop a plan to approach each potential partner with expected benefits, such as creating favorable publicity, better fulfillment of the partner's community mission, or development of a new consumer market or expansion of an existing base.

- **Partnership building requires a team approach.**

Owners, residents, and staff must all be involved in identifying and soliciting partners. Owners should take the lead by forming a steering committee, board of directors, or residents' council that can form a partnership development plan and help provide the labor needed to individually solicit each partner. Center staff are essential for maintaining partnership contacts and identifying new sources for funding or support.

- **Partners are readily attracted to centers that already have stable sources of financial support.**

Multi-year commitments of money, volunteers, or in-kind contributions make a center more sustainable and are likely to attract even more support if partners are confident their money is well invested. Strong alternative sources of funding, such as contributions by the owner or user fees, will also help convince partners that the center is a successful endeavor and well worth their support.

If you have any questions on how to find potential partners for your Neighborhood Networks Center, please call **your local HUD Neighborhood Networks Coordinator**.